



Jerry Baker
America's Master Gardener®

SPECIAL
REPORT

50 GREAT GARDENING SECRETS

VOL. 1

AMAZING TIPS, TRICKS & TONICS!

LUSH LAWNS

QUESTION: Please help! I had my ceilings done with textured paint and sparkles. The workman emptied the drop cloth on my newly sodded lawn. This caused my grass to dry out and patches of grass came out. What can I do to correct this?

A simple soil saturation of 1 tbsp. children's shampoo per gallon of water over top of a light feeding should do the trick.

QUESTION: How do I get rid of moss in my lawn?

Sunshine is the only true cure; improving your drainage will help. Also, try a moss killer like MossMaster®; it is available in many garden centers and my Garden Shop Catalog.

QUESTION: How do I get rid of ground ivy in my lawn?

Pre-soak the ivy with soapy water, then spray with any weed killer, adding 1 tbsp. of soap to the weed killer.

QUESTION: If I buy liquid fertilizer in the fall (when it's on clearance), is it still effective the next year?

Yes, as long as you keep it from freezing, keep it sealed tight, and out of bright sunlight.

QUESTION: How do I kill clover that is taking over my lawn?

Use any of the broadleaf weed killers at the recommended rate. Be sure to prespray the lawn with soapy water for better adhesion, using 1 tbsp. to the gallon.

QUESTION: What is the formula for preventing dog burnout on my lawn?

Apply gypsum at a rate of 50 lbs. per 2500 sq. ft. of lawn area.

QUESTION: My garden has been invaded by crown vetch. What can I use to get rid of it?

Is a patriot missile a little too strong? If so, then use Round-Up®, Kleen-Up® or Shoot-Out®. Watch how you apply it because it kills everything it touches. For large areas, you can spray, but for smaller or isolated pockets, apply with one of those sponge like paint brushes.

QUESTION: What is the formula to decompose grass clippings and thatch?

Overspray the pile with 1 can of old fashioned Coca-Cola® and 1 cup of Thatch Buster™ in your 20 gallon hose-end sprayer.

QUESTION: I have a problem that began in my neighbor's lawn. The grass turned white in a small circular patch. Each year, the circular ring gets bigger. Now I noticed it in my yard. Can you give me a remedy?

It's a Fairy Ring! Punch holes in the entire area with a sharp stick. Apply dry laundry soap from your hand-held spreader set on a #3 setting. Wait a week, and then fertilize.

QUESTION: Is there a special product that tumbleweeds do not like? They seem to be taking over our pasture.

Try using a preemerge weed control in early spring that contains TEAM®.

QUESTION: How can I get rid of Japanese Bamboo? I've pulled it out, roots and all. I cut the tops as soon as it flowers. I've sprayed it with weed killer. Nothing seems to work. Help!

You can use poison ivy killer, a hoe, and hot, dry weather. Be sure to spray it with soapy water first for better adhesion.

QUESTION: If we put grass clippings, leaves, etc. in a pile, will they compost by themselves or do I have to do anything else to facilitate it?

No, you should sprinkle any kind of fine soil 1/8" to 1/4" deep on each 9" layer of compost, and then spray with a warm can of Coca Cola Classic® that has been lightly shaken up. The soil contains the decaying bacteria, and the Coke feeds the bacteria.

TOWERING TREES

QUESTION: When can I transplant a Butterfly Bush? How and how much do I prune?

Transplant very early in the fall. Prune after it is done blossoming in the summer. Take it back to no smaller than 6 inches.

QUESTION: Why are my azaleas and other plants turning brown and dying?

I have no idea, but here is what you can do to find out: 1) Check to see if any weed killer was used in the area. 2) Dig near the roots and look for soil insects. 3) Hold a white card under the foliage and shake (looking for insects).

QUESTION: How do I rid my row of hedges of poison oak without killing the hedge in the process?

Poison oak and poison ivy killer ought to do the trick. Make sure you use it very carefully.

QUESTION: What do I do to make a 15 year old wisteria plant bloom?

Prune all of the young, fast growth out in early fall, and then root prune in October.

QUESTION: How do you fertilize overgrown shrubs that have been neglected for over 12 years?

I would use evergreen cartridges in a root feeder. You should also feed them every 3 weeks with my All Season Green-Up Tonic all summer long.

QUESTION: What do you recommend to rid lilacs of mold?

Mix 1 cup of liquid dish soap to 20 gallons of water. Then mix 6 tbsp. of rose and flower dust into a paste and add it to the soapy solution.

QUESTION: I bought a Foster Holly with red berries 3 years ago, and it has not produced. Do I have to have 2 trees?

It is suggested that you have a family of 3 holly bushes. However, a male in the neighborhood can take care of a harem within a half mile.

QUESTION: At the base of my magnolia tree is a deep hole full of ants and other pests. Should I use an insecticide?

You bet! Make a warm soapy water solution, adding the insect control (Dursban®) at the recommended rate. Then fill the hole with fresh soil.

QUESTION: Is English Ivy a good choice for groundcover around oak trees?

It is, however, it will go up the tree which will provide a ladder for your neighborhood insects. You are much better off with myrtle which is strong, hardy, and attractive.

QUESTION: I have several willow oak trees about 8' to 10' feet tall. I would like to know how to fertilize them.

Willow trees should be surface fed in the spring with a 1-1-1 ratio lawn food, i.e., 8-8-8 or 10-10-10 will do just fine. When you feed, add 1 lb. of sugar per 50 lb. bag. After the dry feeding, overspray the base of the trunk out to the weep line with a mixture of 1 cup Yarden Activator™ and 1 tbsp. corn syrup or molasses in your 20 gallon hose-end sprayer, filling the balance of the jar with warm water.

QUESTION: We need to know how to prune an apple tree. We recently moved here, and the apples were only about 1-1/2" in diameter, but very good—like golden delicious.

Root prune at the weep line (dripline) with a sharp shovel in the fall, and prune when all leaves have fallen. Seal all cuts with a mixture of interior latex paint and a few drops of anti-septic mouthwash added.

QUESTION: How can I get rid of wild morning glory vines?

Use Shoot-Out,® Kleen-up,® or Round-Up.®

QUESTION: When is it too late to prune and fertilize a dogwood tree?

Prune when the blossoms fall, and don't feed after August 15th.

FANTASITIC FLOWERS

QUESTION: Can Yarden Shampoo help to prevent black spot on my roses?

Yes, the mixture of 1 cup Yarden Shampoo, 1 cup chewing tobacco juice, and 1 cup antiseptic mouthwash in your 20 gallon hose-end sprayer should control black spot. If it already has a toe-hold, add an all purpose liquid fruit tree spray at 50% of the recommended rate to the mix.

QUESTION: My phlox plants get beautiful flowers on them, but the stems and leaves get so covered with powdery mildew that I can't use them in flower arrangements. How can I take care of the problem?

Spray the plants with any all-purpose fruit tree spray containing Captan every 14 days. If you use a mixture of 1 tbsp. of Yarden Shampoo or liquid dish soap and 1 tbsp. antiseptic mouthwash, and bathe everything in sight every 2 weeks, you won't need the Captan.

QUESTION: Can you give me some advice on planting a perennial flower garden with wild flowers?

Any of the many wildflower mixes that you can buy through any gardening catalogs are perennial mixes. The secret to keeping them producing? Mow them down to 3" in the fall, and let the cut stems lay over the winter.

QUESTION: I have grass growing in a large area of Phlox Subulata. What will kill the grass without harming the Phlox?

Use Shootout, Kleen-Up or Round Up applied to the grass areas with a sponge paint brush. It's a lot of work, but it's the only thing that will do the job.

QUESTION: I have a beautiful wisteria vine that is growing up an old dead elm trunk. The vine is 6 years old, and yet I only get a dozen blooms each year. What am I doing wrong?

I bet you don't cut out the speed runners that appear in mid-summer. First thing, cut them off as soon as they appear. Root prune in the fall, and feed in the spring.

HAPPY HOUSEPLANTS

QUESTION: How do I grow trailing Fuchsia?

You need a medium shade location. Feed it twice a week with fish fertilizer at 25% of the recommended rate. Also, add 1 tsp. of children's shampoo and 1/2 tsp. of clear corn syrup to the fertilizer mixture.

QUESTION: What do you do with an Amaryllis plant after it's done blooming?

Reduce watering, and place the bulb in a cool location 60° to 65°F, divide the bulblets, and repot.

QUESTION: My June cactus developed little black spots, and now it will not bloom. I use your watering mixture only when it's dry, but the problem continues. Help!

Try 3 drops of children's shampoo and a pinch of tomato/vegetable dust mixed into a tonic that is applied every other week.

QUESTION: My bonzai tree is 2-1/2' tall, and lives in a large pottery pot receiving medium light. Although there is lots of new growth on the top branches, the tips of the bottom branches are getting brown and have to be cut off. I feed her with fish emulsion. What is causing the problem?

You are feeding her too often. Also, only use fish emulsion every 3 feedings, and add a cap full of regular, non-diet pop to your plant food mix.

QUESTION: Could you please tell me how to replant violets?

This job is best done after 7:00 p.m. Also, move the plants up only 1 pot size, and refill the pot with professional planter mix.

QUESTION: I have a Bird of Paradise plant that is 5 years old and has good height, but has never blossomed. What can I do to get it to bloom?

Put it in the coolest room in the house. Poke holes in the soil with a knitting needle and feed with my General Foliage House Plant Food which is 1/2 tbsp. ammonia, 1/2 tbsp. hydrogen peroxide, 1/2 tbsp. baby shampoo, 1/4 tsp. instant tea, 1 vitamin with iron, and 1 capful bourbon in 1 gal. warm water.

TASTY VEGETABLES

QUESTION: What can I do for a peach tree where the leaves come out, it blooms, and then the fruit drops off?

You must dormant spray in the spring and fall. Then start a regular spraying program with a mixture of 1 cup Yarden Shampoo or baby shampoo and 6 tsp. of tomato/vegetable dust per 20 gallons of water every 14 days.

QUESTION: What can I do to rhubarb that turns yellow then brown about mid-season? Is this a blight?

Could be, but I want you to try feeding it with liquid fish fertilizer and iron. Also, spray the plant at the beginning of the season with 6 tsp. of tomato/vegetable dust in your 20 gallon hose-end sprayer.

QUESTION: My raspberries get 2 rings around the tip where the berries should be forming. The tips then bend over and die. I have also noticed a worm between the two rings. What is this, and how can it be prevented?

It is caused by the Raspberry Cane Borer. The mother is a black and yellow beetle. As soon as you see a tip wilt, you should cut it off below the rings. Remove all old canes after harvest and spray the plants with 1 tbsp. of Yarden Shampoo per gallon of water.

QUESTION: Please tell me how to get rid of thistles in my strawberry bed, and when treatment should be done?

Use a pre-emerge crabgrass control in late February.

QUESTION: How do I get a few veggies growing in my garden under 2 Eucalyptus trees? I have mixed sulphur, gypsum, peat moss and manure with the soil already, planting when the weather cooled in September (ideal time, I'm told). The veggies came up, but 3 weeks later, the plants died.

Keep your mitts off the sulphur in the future! Add lime at a rate of 20 lbs. per 100 sq. ft., and apply 1 lb. of sugar over the soil using your whirly spreader.

QUESTION: I cannot get my parsnips to sprout; can you tell me what the secret is?

Dig a trench 12" deep and 6" wide and fill it with 1/3 sharp sand, 1/3 professional mix, and 1/3 local garden soil. Then plant them.

QUESTION: I have transplanted sweet peas from along the roadside. They have grown great for two years, but have very few blooms. What are your suggestions?

Work an ample amount of chicken manure into the soil before you plant.

QUESTION: How do I stop tomato plants from getting brown, wilting, then dropping off (blossom-end rot)?

Add 6 to 8 inches of grass clippings to the soil below when you plant them.

QUESTION: My Mandarin Orange tree produces loads of fruit, but the fruit is bitter. How can I produce fruit with a better taste?

A small application of magnesium sulphate (Epsom salts), 1/2 tsp. per 4" pot size, should do the trick.

QUESTION: When do you fertilize strawberries, and what do you use?

After you are done picking, wait until August, clean up the beds, and use a 10-10-10 fertilizer at a rate of 2 cups per 100 sq. feet. Then cover with clean mulch for the winter.

QUESTION: How much water do asparagus need?

They grow naturally along swampy areas, so they need a lot of spring rain.

QUESTION: Why do pears have a musty taste?

About the only reason I can think of is that you had a spell of wet weather which leeches out many of the trace elements necessary for sugar production. Try spraying the tree with either Yarden Activator™ or a mixture of: 1/3 can beer, 1/3 can regular (non-diet) cola, and 1 tsp. liquid dish soap in your 20 gallon hose-end sprayer, filling the balance of the jar with water. Add it to the soil during and after wet spells.

PESKY PESTS

QUESTION: How can I get rid of snail slugs?

Two applications per year, spring and midsummer, of slug pellets should do the trick, but you must do this for 2 seasons. Also, spray foliage and soil with 4 tbsp. of aluminum sulphate mixed in a gallon of water after sundown to avoid damage to the foliage.

QUESTION: How do you rid Chinese Elm trees of beetles? We have tried professional spraying and injection. I would hate to have the trees removed.

Saturate the soil with a mixture of Dursban® at the recommended rate and children's shampoo at a rate of 1 cup per 20 gallons. Add a half cup of tobacco juice as a kicker.

QUESTION: The birds are picking and the squirrels are eating every apple on our trees before they ripen. What do we do?

Short of living in the orchard, cover the trees with tree nets; they are cheap, light and easy to use.

QUESTION: Can you tell me what to use on my potato plants to repel Colorado beetles and other potato insects?

All purpose liquid fruit tree spray and Yarden Shampoo, 1 tbsp. per gallon of water, mixed together, should do it.

QUESTION: How do I discourage armadillos?

Get rid of the reason they visit—BUGS! Apply Dursban® in spring and fall, and water in with Yarden Shampoo (1 cup per 20 gallons of water).

QUESTION: What are the ingredients for destroying or controlling Box Elder Bugs?

Liquid Sevin® and shampoo at a rate of 1 tbsp. per gallon water.

QUESTION: Could you please give me some advice on how to keep my neighbor's cats out of my flowers?

Crush moth crystals into a powder, and spread them on the ground under foot. Then add 2 tbsp. cayenne pepper and 2 tbsp. black pepper to the area.

QUESTION: Is there something I can use on my soil before planting this spring to kill spider mites?

Apply Dursban® at the recommended rate and overspray with 1 tbsp. of Yarden Shampoo per gallon of water.

QUESTION: Our cherry trees had fruit on them, but what can we do to keep the birds from eating all the cherries? Also, our rhododendron is ailing - holes in the leaves and turning color. We've tried Muracid, but it was no help! What can we do?

For the birds in the cherry trees, try a mixture of 1 tbsp. Yarden Shampoo and 1 tbsp. ammonia per gallon of water; spray between rains. As for the rhododendron, Muracid® is not a bug killer, it's a plant food. For the bugs, try a mixture of liquid fruit tree spray at the recommended rate with 1 tbsp. Yarden Shampoo added per gallon of water.

QUESTION: My lawn has dozens of mounds or bumps in it. They are 2" or 3" across and an inch or so high with a hole in the center and no grass. It looks like I have earthworms or night crawlers. I know that worms are good for the ground, but they are causing more damage than good. What can I do?

Apply a light application of ammonium sulphate (with your hand held spreader set on #1) in the early spring.

QUESTION: You have a formula using gin, vinegar and soap to kill violets and other weeds—but in what amounts, please? Also, do you have a solution for cats in my flower beds?

To make the weed killer, use an ounce of gin, vinegar, and liquid dish soap in a quart of warm water. Apply with a window sprayer. For the cats, use coffee grounds and orange peels.

QUESTION: What can I do for pepper maggots? I cannot rotate the crop. Is there anything I can do now, before planting? If not, how about during the growing season?

Apply dry Dursban® at the recommended rate on or before April 15th, no matter what the weather is (well, if there's a blizzard, I'll understand). But do it as soon as possible thereafter.

QUESTION: We have a 160' long honeysuckle hedge that has been attacked by aphids. What will kill them?

If you are talking about Witches' Broom damage, try using any all-purpose rose & flower dust at the recommended rate every 3 weeks. Before applying, however, bathe with the Yarden Shampoo™ mixture or 1 cup liquid dish soap, 1 cup chewing tobacco juice, and 1 cup antiseptic mouthwash in your 20 gallon hose-end sprayer.

QUESTION: Could you please give your repellent formula that had toilet bowl deodorizer in it? We have armadillos digging holes under our shrubs and trees that are at least 8" in diameter and 3 to 4' deep. We've tried everything.

Try using paradichloroene crystals which you should be able to find at your local garden center.

QUESTION: I have Zoysia grass, and I am having trouble with grubs. What can I do to get rid of them?

Whatever type of grass you have, the control is the same. Apply any dry soil insect control that contains Dursban®, adding 1 cup of dry laundry soap to the bag.

QUESTION: Can I get rid of earwigs with no poison? If not, then what should I use?

You use the word poison like a swear word! You can safely use Dursban®, indoors or out, to destroy earwigs. And then keep anything not in use off of the ground so they can't hide.

YARDEN ODDS & ENDS

QUESTION: Is activated charcoal the same as "pure granulated horticultural charcoal"?

Yes!

QUESTION: What are the proper proportions of water to chewing tobacco to make tobacco juice?

4 fingers grabbed from the pouch, tied into a piece of cheese cloth, placed into a gallon of hot water, and left there.

QUESTION: About a year ago, I heard you mention how to use banana peels in some formula. What's the story?

Dry the banana peel in the microwave oven. Then crush the dried peel into a powder and apply 1 tsp. per plant per season. Or add 6 quarts of banana powder to 150 square feet of garden.

QUESTION: We are landscaping a hill from scratch on a mixture of clay soil, red shale and sandstone. What advice can you give on what to plant to hold the hill up. Everything we plant seems to get washed down the hill when it rains.

You must terrace the hill first, and then plant on the horizontal portions of the terrace.

QUESTION: Can Epsom salts be diluted in water and used with a hose-end sprayer? If so, how much salt per gallon?

Dissolve 1 cup of Epsom salts in boiling water, and when they cool, apply with a 20 gallon hose-end sprayer.

QUESTION: We don't use whiskey. Can we substitute beer in your formulas?

Yes, use 1/2 cup per gallon of water.

QUESTION: I have a 20 year old, three foot dwarf palm tree that is getting small branches with seeds. Can I reroot them for a new plant?

Yes! Soak the seeds in warm tea water for a day or so, and then plant them in professional mix.

QUESTION: I would like to move my garden to a plot of ground that is covered with Bermuda grass. Could you please tell me how I could begin preparing the area?

Spray the area first with a warm soapy water solution, and then follow with an application of Round-Up,[®] Shoot-Out,[®] Kleen Up,[®] or other systemic grass & weed control.

QUESTION: I need your help and advice. I live in a landfill area in which soil is 90% sand, 9% clay and 1% organic, with sea shells mixed in. The soil is high in sodium and calcium (pH. is 7.7). What will dissolve the sea shells to lower the calcium level?

Calcium as a rule does not effect the pH. Time and regular applications of lime will do the job.

QUESTION: I'm a beginner having problems using your formulas with my hose-end sprayer that has no markings for ounces. The directions that come with the sprayer are for their plant food. Your formula amounts fill past the 20 gallon mark. Will you please advise me?

You can mix my formulas in a bucket, and then pour the tonic into the hose-end sprayer jar until full. Add the balance of the tonic when room is available in the sprayer jar. For example, into a comfortable size bucket add: 1 can of beer, 1 cup of liquid dish soap, 1/2 cup of molasses, 1 cup of liquid lawn food and 1 cup of ammonia.

QUESTION: I worry about using some of your tonics. Are the soap and ammonia harmful to the birds?

I have more than my share of healthy, happy birds year after year, so the answer is no.

QUESTION: I'm a little vague on one item in your "Super Tonic." Is it 1 cup of liquid lawn food, or 1 cup of the water-soluble pellets that are also utilized with the 20 gallon sprayer?

It's 1 cup of liquid lawn food or 10 tbsp. of water-soluble plant food in a cup of warm water, and then added in place of the liquid lawn food.

QUESTION: Could you possibly tell me what was wrong and what can be done for my black raspberries — they died on the top 12" or so and the berries turned hard and dried up. Along with this, the leaves on the affected canes turned yellow, but the new growth was healthy and looked fine.

Dormant spray with lime sulphur in early spring and follow up with a fruit or vegetable spray containing Captan. This will stop all of the above.

QUESTION: I have a hanging basket of Bridal Veil outside. Where do I put it in winter? My best indoor sun comes from a southern exposure.

You couldn't ask for a better spot. Be sure to mist spray it 3 times a week with a mixture of 3 drops of ammonia, 3 drops of children's shampoo, and 1 drop of antiseptic mouthwash in a quart of very weak tea water.

QUESTION: I allowed my corkscrew willow tree to be pruned, and now it only has a few twigs here and there. I hope it doesn't die. What can I do to really get it going this spring?

Water the dickens out of it and feed it and feed it and feed it some more with any lawn food. The overspray between the trunk and former weep line with Yarden Activator fertilizer or my All Season Green-Up Tonic every 3 weeks.

QUESTION: I have a 3 year old mock orange bush that is over 6' tall, but has not flowered yet. What do I do to get it to bloom?

Mock orange bushes want light, loose, well-drained soil that is mulched 6" thick. Make sure it gets a lot of sun, and feed in the spring with any poultry, cow or sheep manure.



For more information on Jerry Baker's amazing lawn and garden tips, tricks and tonics using common, everyday products, please write to The YardenCare Company, P.O. Box 6047, Wixom, MI 48393 or call (810) 960-3993.